

Testimony of Eric W. Gjede
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Before the Transportation Committee
Hartford, CT
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Testifying in support of HB 6817 An Act Concerning The Quick Clearance of State Highways

Good morning Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero, Senator Boucher, Representative O'Dea, and members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Eric Gjede and I am assistant counsel at the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA), which represents more than 10,000 large and small companies throughout the state of Connecticut.

CBIA supports HB 6817 as a complimentary companion piece to SB 481.

In a 2013 survey of Connecticut businesses, the number one transportation related concern was highway traffic congestion. Connecticut is home to some of the most heavily congested highways in the country - in particular the I-95, I-84 and I-91 corridors. Respondents noted that congestion plays a role in planning work schedules, limits their markets, prevents meetings with customers, holds up delivery times, and disrupts logistics.

Last week I testified before the committee on SB 481, which would require the Commissioner of Transportation to work together with the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection to develop an enhanced traffic accident management plan. These programs have demonstrated great success in other states in improving accident clearance times. We can't prevent accidents from happening, but we can take steps to minimize their impact on traffic.

A key aspect to Florida's Rapid Scene Clearance program is a financial incentive based upon accident clearance time for responders to heavy duty tractor trailer accidents. A necessary step to such a program in Connecticut would be to absolve these responders from property damage liability in certain cases. By limiting their liability, responders to heavy duty accidents can focus on quick clearance of the highway rather than damaging the tractor trailer's cargo.

CBIA urges the committee to adopt SB 481, and further suggests passage of HB 6817 would facilitate the success of SB 481.